

## Exodus 21 - Thursday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

- After our study of the 10 Commandments in chapter 20, we now, sort of round a corner, here in chapter 21 for the next three chapters.
- In chapter 20 it was the "Law of God," and now in chapters 21-23 it will be, what is referred to as, the "Law of Moses."
- These are laws that establish Israel's legal system. Its chapters like these that don't get a lot attention for a lot of reasons.

- One reason is that, at first glance, they don't really apply to us. After all, this is just Old Testament Law and we're in the New Covenant.
- So the question is; "why do we need to study this if there are no instructions to us, or application for us?" Good question, here's why:
- First, it's imperative that we understand the importance of Old Testament scripture, because every word in God's Word is inspired.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. KJV

- So again, if the Law of Moses does not apply to us, then how can it provide reproof, correction and instruction for us?"
- Because in it we are given a beautiful glimpse of our beautiful God and His unspeakable love for us in sending Jesus to save us.
- In other words, while these laws and regulations do not have direct application to us, they do have profound implication for us.

1 "Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them:2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.3 If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him.4 If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

- It's interesting that the first matter that God would lay down the law on would be with respect to slavery. It's just Who and how God is.
- The first words God spoke to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai was that "He was Jehovah Who had delivered them out of slavery."
- I suppose it seems fitting that He, as the one Who delivered them out of slavery, would be the one Who would first address slavery.

- This brings up an interesting question; "If the Israelites were delivered out of slavery in Egypt, then why the need for slavery laws?"
- It's important to understand the slavery, back then with the Israelites, was vastly different that the slavery we have known of today.
- We have instances in the scriptures where an Israelite could still be a slave to another Israelite, consider the following:

1. If an Israelite came to poverty and needed money, they could and even would sell themselves into slavery. (Leviticus 25:39)
2. If an Israelite had become bankrupt, they would become the slave of their creditors. (2 Kings 4:1)
3. If an Israelite was caught stealing, and unable to pay the amount of the restitution, they would become a slave to pay. (Exodus 22:3-4)
4. If an Israelite family could not afford to live, they may actually sell their children into slavery. (Exodus 21.7)

- Another question that can come up is; "does this mean that God condones slavery?" No, He's not condoning it, He's regulating it.
- Not only is He regulating it, but, as we're about to see in the next couple of verses, He is also going to be exemplifying a form of it.
- Slavery was ingrained in the Israelites. This is all they really knew. They were born into it, and now God is going to deal with it.

5 But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'6 then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

- This is interesting. In the event that a slave wants to remain in slavery to his master because of his love for his master, he can stay.
- What's even more interesting is that the slave had to have his ear pierced on the doorpost as a sign that he would serve him forever.

- This speaks of and points to Jesus the Christ. He was pierced of His own volition because of the love of the Father, and His love for us.
- We have a prophetic Messianic Psalm that speaks of this ceremony taking place between God the Father, and God the Son.

**Psalm 40:6-8** 6 Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. 7 Then I said, "Here I am, I have come--it is written about me in the scroll. 8 I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." NIV

- The Apostle Paul alludes to this in his letter to the church in Philippi when he describes the nature of Jesus, and the heart of the Father.

**Philippians 2:5-8** 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. NKJV

- This is why study chapters like this. We have here a beautifully painted portrait of God's love for us in sending His Son to us.
- There are seemingly nebulous details that at first glance may be missed however, with a closer look we can see why they're recorded.

| INFORMATION  | IMPLICATION   |
|--|---|
| Man enslaved for "six" years (the number of man)           | Jesus became a man and took sin's enslavement                         |
| Man freed on the "seventh" year (the number of completion) | Jesus freed us from sins slavery with the completed work on the cross |
| Man, of his own volition, could serve for life out of love | Jesus, of His own volition, went to the cross because of love         |
| Man would be pierced as a sign of his love                 | Jesus was pierced for our iniquities as a sign of "no greater love"   |
| Man would go to the wooden doorpost in order to do this    | Jesus went to the wooden cross in order to do this                    |

7 "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

- At first glance, this may have the appearance of being unfair to women who were unable to go free as the male slaves were.
- God isn't being unfair He is being kind and providing for the female slave by having her stay where her needs could be taken care of.
- One commentator has suggested that this is good instruction for us as parents when releasing our sons and daughters from the home.

8 If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. 9 And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. 10 If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. 11 And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.

- This gives us further explanation as to how God was actually providing for the care of the women. They would marry the master or son.
- Notice the rights afforded the female servant if she is dealt with unfairly. God is protecting her providing for her, and even freeing her.

- Again, I think we would be grossly remiss were we to not see this as God, not only being fair, but being both loving and just as well.

- It's rather remarkable considering that women would even have these rights, when at this time they were mostly regarded as property.

- Now, these verses present a potential difficulty as it relates to polygamy where, in verse 10, God addresses the taking of another wife.

- The question, like in the case of slavery is; "does God condone polygamy?" No, we'll see the reason for this revealed later in scripture.

- God isn't condoning it, He is regulating it. After getting the Israelites out of Egypt, He has to now get the Egypt out of the Israelites.

12 "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 13 However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee. 14 "But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.

- We go from laws about servants in slavery to laws concerning murder and capital punishment as in the case of 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder.
- For 1<sup>st</sup> degree "premeditated" murder there was the death penalty. It had to be dealt with in this way, back in that day, and should today.
- As in the case of manslaughter, the thought here is that there was a time of exile for the one who committed the crime, until the trial

15 "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. 16 "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. 17 "And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

- This is intense as it relates to the capital punishment of children who strikes or threatens their parents. It also deals with kidnapping.
- We sort of dealt with this when we were studying the fifth commandment, but suffice it to say that God takes this very seriously!

18 "If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but is confined to his bed, 19 if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck him shall be acquitted. He shall only pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for him to be thoroughly healed.

- This is interesting because it requires a man to provide for the needs of the man who has become injured and handicapped at his hand.
- If the one he injured makes a complete recovery, then he is released from that financial obligation from that point onward.

20 "And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. 21 Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his property.

- At first, this may be hard to understand because it has to do with a master beating his servant, and seemingly getting away with it.
- Notice it says that if the servant doesn't die right away, the master who beat him should not be punished. This seems patently unfair.

- The thought is that if the servant survived the beating, it would indicate that this was not attempted murder on the part of the master.

- If the servant dies immediately, it's murder and should be punished. If he died in a day or two, the property loss is punishment enough.

22 "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.

- This is yet another instance in which we see God taking care of the women and children. If they're accidentally hurt, they still have rights.
- In other words, if harm comes to her and or her child, restitution must be made in proportion to any physical problems or birth defects.

23 But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life,

- This verse has profound implication and application, and can be easily missed if it's not taken in context to what God is saying here.
- If there's harm to the mom or unborn child leading to a miscarriage, then, its life for life. God takes the rights of the unborn, seriously!

24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

- Once again, God is not condoning revenge, God is regulating revenge. The restitution should not be disproportionate to the harm.
- If harm has befallen me at the hand of another, it should be one eye for one eye, not two eyes for one eye. Tooth for tooth, not teeth.

26 "If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. 27 And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth.

- This is talking about servants now, and God is really raising the bar here. Instead of an eye for an eye, it was freedom for an eye.
- In other words, if a master injured his servant, he would be required to set them free losing what he could have received from that slave.

"If this did not teach them *humanity*, it taught them *caution*, as one rash blow might have deprived them of all right to the future services of the slave; and this self-interest obliged them to be cautious and circumspect."

Adam Clarke

- This brings up an interesting question as it relates to the principle of "an eye for an eye." Does this still apply to us today?
- For the answer to this, we need look no further than the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus will address this very law:

**Matthew 5:38-42** 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. NIV

- So does this mean that God changed His mind and thus He also changed His laws? No, He is fulfilling these laws with and by love.
- If I love my neighbor as much as I already love myself, then I will overlook the offense and turn the other way going the extra mile.

- So why wasn't it this way for the Israelites back then? Because, this is God's way of pointing them to the person of Jesus Christ.
- Jesus, as the Messiah, would be the personification of God's love, thus fulfilling all the laws and regulations because of that love.

28 "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. 29 But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. 30 If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him.

- This addresses the matter of responsibility and culpability as it relates to one's livestock causing the death of a man or woman.
- If an animal, in this case an ox, gored someone to death by accident, the owner would be acquitted, but the ox would be put to death.
- If the ox demonstrated a propensity for violence, and wasn't put to death, then kills someone, the owner & ox should be put to death.

**FOX NEWS - Chimpanzee Attack Revives Calls for Federal Primate Law** - Wednesday, February 18, 2009 - Police shot and killed a 200-pound chimpanzee in Connecticut Monday after it attacked a 55-year-old woman, leaving her in critical condition with major, "life-altering" injuries to her face and hands.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,495787,00.html>

31 Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. 32 If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

- Notice its thirty shekels of silver and the ox is put to death. That's an interesting amount given the fact that it's what put Jesus to death.

33 "And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it, 34 the owner of the pit shall make it good; he shall give money to their owner, but the dead animal shall be his.

- This law deals with negligence. A man is responsible if he digs a pit and neglects to cover it resulting in the death of an animal.
- He is required to pay the money to the owner of the animal, and interestingly, he gets to keep the dead animal. It's now his problem.
- This also follows along the lines of; "you break it, you buy it!" Now, the negligent party may learn to be more responsible next time.

35 "If one man's ox hurts another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the money from it; and the dead ox they shall also divide. 36 Or if it was known that the ox tended to thrust in time past, and its owner has not kept it confined, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall be his own.

- This law deals with simple fairness, and just doing what is right by taking responsibility and making it right no matter what the cost is.